

# ICT for Education in Somalia



*Source: CIA World Factbook*

## Overview

Somalia gained its independence in 1960, and ten years later the country was plagued by a civil war that lasted for twenty-one years. By 1991, this war had ceased, but the education system had disintegrated beyond repair. Sporadic fighting among war lords guarding territorial interest continued until 2004 when the Transitional Federal Government was installed to normalize the administration and bring back law and order.

The country is still facing political challenges as in June 2006. In June 2006, a loose coalition of clerics, business leaders, and Islamic court militias known as the Supreme

Council of Islamic Courts (SCIC) defeated powerful Mogadishu warlords and took control of the capital. The Courts continued to expand, spreading their influence throughout much of southern Somalia and threatening to overthrow the TFG.

With this political instability, the education sector is one of the most affected given the displacement of people, destruction of infrastructure and schools and looting of equipment and books. As much as things are slowly returning to normal, thanks to the efforts of UN bodies, NGOs and local communities in Somalia, education system revival and reforms are just but beginning. As much as ICT is acknowledged as a possible tool in the reform agenda and a possible catalyst in bringing about better quality and more accessible education in Somalia, it does not feature in the current cards on the table of most of the organizations working in Somalia, leave alone the Ministry in Charge.

## **Introduction**

Somalia covers a landmass of 637,657 sq km on the east coast of Africa bordering, Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti. Years of fighting between rival warlords and an inability to deal with famine and disease have led to the deaths of up to one million people. Comprised of a former British protectorate and an Italian colony, Somalia was created in 1960 when the two territories merged. Since then, its development has been hindered by deep political divisions.

Agriculture is the most important sector, with livestock normally accounting for about 40% of GDP and about 65% of export earnings, but Saudi Arabia's ban on Somali livestock, due to Rift Valley Fever concerns, has severely hampered the sector. Nomads and semi-nomads, who are dependent upon livestock for their livelihood, make up a large portion of the population. 44% of the population is under the age of 15.<sup>1</sup>

Table 1: Selected Country Statistics

Population	8,863,338 (2006 Est)
Languages	Somali (official), Arabic, Italian, English
Adult Literacy Rate	19.2(2002)
GDP (purchasing power parity)	\$5.023 billion (2006 est.)
Human Development Index	Not available
Human Poverty Index	Not available

## **Education System**

Somalia has adopted the 8-4-4 education system with 8 years of primary education, 4 year secondary and 4 years undergraduate studies. The Ministry of Education is responsible for primary, secondary, technical, vocational, primary and technical teacher training and non-formal education. The Ministry of Higher Education and Culture oversees secondary teacher training colleges, the Somali Academy for Science and Arts, the National Museum, and National Library. The National Universities (6) are autonomous.<sup>2</sup>

Education and formal classroom learning opportunities are limited and unavailable for a majority of children in Somalia. There have been substantial increases in the number of operational schools and in enrolment rates since the Transitional Federal Government came to power in 2005, but considerable disparities in the quality of and access to primary education are still problematic in parts of the country because of the socio-economic, cultural and political realities. Primary education is paid for and managed by regional educational committees which assumed the role of the government during the war. Only in Putland is education free and teachers are paid by the administration.<sup>3</sup>

Most existing schools are concentrated in and around urban areas and are mainly financed by fees or other forms of support from parents and communities, with some input from external agencies. There are various NGOs, both local and international working in the education sector in Somalia and an Education Sectoral Committee under the Somalia Support Secretariat sitting in Nairobi Kenya. Somalia has one of the lowest primary school enrolment rates in the world.

A Survey of Primary Schools in Somalia for 2003-2004 showed that there are 1,172 operating schools with a total enrolment of over 285,574 children representing an 19.9 per cent gross enrolment ratio (GER). Gender-related disparities remain an area of major concern. The survey results revealed that only slightly over one third, or 37 per cent, of pupils are girls at the lower primary school levels. Since the 2003/4 survey, there has been very little progress toward reducing the gender disparity, which increases rapidly in higher grades.<sup>4</sup>

Working alongside other United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local development groups, and the Regional Educational Committees, UNICEF has helped develop a new national curriculum and textbooks for primary grades. Somali educationalists joined a two-year process that was fraught with logistical difficulties and political sensitivities. A series of consultative workshops ensured that all stakeholders had a voice in the process, resulting in a 'home-grown' curriculum that respects cultural differences while advocating for the rights of all children. The curriculum is now in place in nine out of ten primary schools.<sup>5</sup>

Table 2: Selected Education Statistics<sup>6,10</sup>

Net Primary Enrolment	62.5% (2005)
Net Secondary Enrolment	24% (2005)
Gross Tertiary Enrolment	5% (2005)
Adult Literacy	37% (2005)
Gender Parity Index	Not available
Education Expenditure as a % of GDP	Not available

## Education Policy

Since the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) came into power, a lot of effort through various international organizations notably UNICEF and the UNESCO has been to increase primary school enrolment with the adopted minimum standards of quality primary education and to improve access to post-primary education for Somali children/youth, including technical, vocational and higher.<sup>7,9</sup>

Some of the strategies used by the UN Country team in Somalia in collaboration with the TFG include:-

- A massive enrolment and back to school campaign increase number of child and girl friendly learning spaces to 7,313
- Provision of alternative primary education to 18,000 school-age children
- Extension of school feeding programme to cover 60,000 children all over Somalia
- Target female enrolment of 40 to 50 percent at all levels
- Provide literacy, life skills and vocational training to 5,000 ex-militia
- In-service training for 1800 Head Teachers and mentoring for 4,500 teachers
- Textbook induction for 4,500 upper primary teachers
- Conduct Grade 8 examinations for 4,095 students and continue to reach out to Arabic medium schools and unify the curriculum

At the secondary school levels, the policies were gear towards:-

- Increasing enrolment in secondary schools to 25,000 students, targeting 35% female participation
- Complete 70% of the development of curriculum and assessment systems to international standards
- Increase enrolment in technical-vocational training to 8,000 trainees, provide 1540 textbooks in 64 titles to vocational training centres (VTCs) and upgrade managers and instructors of VTCs
- Develop a scholarship programme for 134 Somali university students
- HIV/AIDS mainstreamed as part of life skills in teacher training and publications including for children/youth and alternate methods of communicating to youth including through radio programmes.

These objectives form the basis of a draft education policy that also aims to increase capacity for staff at the Ministry of Education, reconstruct schools that have been destroyed and improve the curriculum.

### **Current Level of ICT Infrastructure**

Despite the lack of a central government and an economy in ruins, Somalia's telecommunication sector boasts of cutting edge technologies and a mushrooming of wireless solutions to the surprise of its closest neighbours. For several years, the country was, to all intents and purposes, disconnected from the rest of the world but it now has the lowest calling rates in the region.

Prior to 1991, the country had only 8,500 operational fixed lines, most of which were in the capital, Mogadishu. In the ensuing political turbulence, that infrastructure was destroyed, along with its Public Switch Transmission Network. This left Somalis without the means to connect to the large expatriate community of friends and relatives outside the country.

After the war, Infrastructure had to be built from scratch but the situation has developed quickly off a low base. There are now an estimated 68,000 phone lines, divided between fixed (48,000) and mobile (20,000), according to the Somali Telecom Association. Internet services have 4,500 subscribers and an estimated 18,000 users.

The International Telecommunications Union estimated the total number of lines at the end of 2000 at 15,000.

Table 3: Selected ICT Statistics<sup>1</sup>

Telephone Lines	100,000 (2005)
Mobile Phone Subscribers	5000,000 (2005)
Internet Users	90,000 (2005)
Television Stations	4 (2001)
Internet Hosts	3 (2006)
Radio Stations	11 FM 1 Shortwave (2001)

### **ICT in Schools**

There is a seemingly healthy ICT infrastructure, however, this is mostly found in the urban centers and especially the capital city, Mogadishu. This therefore, translates to limited use of ICT in the school system in Somalia most of which are located out of Mogadishu. Policy efforts in Education have been focused on reviving the education system, increasing enrolments and reducing the school drop out rate and not ICT. There are some private schools that use ICT but more as an administrative tool than integrated into the teaching and learning tool. Most of these schools are around the urban centers and especially Mogadishu and in the semi-autonomous province of Puntland.

### **ICT in Tertiary**

The UNDP together with other partners including the World Bank and the African Virtual University (AVU) are supporting the Somalia Somali Institutional & Capacity Development project (SICAD) whose outputs include capacity building of key government bodies, civil service training and tertiary institutions strengthened through increased use of ICTs.<sup>8</sup>

The Online Distance Learning Initiative which was launched in 2005 enables students to attain internationally accredited university qualifications through expanded access to global learning and knowledge through partnerships with institutions in other countries and builds their research capacities.

The six institutions being supported by UNDP under the World Bank Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) Distance Learning and Connectivity Project are East Africa University (Bossaso), Puntland State University (Garowe), The Somali Institute of Management and Administration Development (SIMAD) (Mogadishu), Mogadishu University, University of Hargeisa and Amoud University (Boroma). They are also part of the African Virtual University (AVU) network with access to digital resources and online short courses; long courses in journalism and teacher education are underway.<sup>11</sup>

### **Major initiatives/projects currently underway**

At the national policy and strategy level, all efforts by the government and the donor community has been placed on getting the school system to work and encourage parents to send their children to school. Efforts have also been put in disarming young militia and re-integrating them into the education system either through the school system or vocational training centres. UNICEF and UNESCO have taken up the challenge of reconstruction in Somalia and are pushing several projects but none of these have any ICT components in them.

In 2006, UNDP in partnership with the World Bank provided for resources for inclusion of the 6 Somalia Universities into the African Development Fund/NEPAD Teacher Education Project through the African Virtual University network. This effort was aimed at developing teacher and training capacity for Somalia faster and of the same quality with the rest of the region.

<http://www.avu.org/documents/Fact-Sheet.pdf>

### **Identification and description of constraints re: the use of**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Enabling</b>	<b>Constraining</b>
Political Instability		Somalia continues to face serious political problems have disrupted the education system time and again. This instability does not provide an enabling platform for structure use of ICT in the education Sector
Policy Framework		Due to the instability in the country, efforts are only begging in bringing children back to class. The focus of the country is, therefore,

		more on enrolment and vocational training. As much as it is acknowledged that ICT can play a role, no effort is in place to introduce ICT in the teaching and learning environment as yet.
Infrastructure and Cost of Bandwidth		Like in other African countries, infrastructure is still an issue in Somalia, with the war destroying most of the basic telecommunication infrastructure, new wireless networks are coming into place and providing the much needed connectivity albeit in the commercially viable places. Most of these wireless technologies are based on costly satellite networks.
Electricity		Electricity distribution was not spared the destruction of war. As much as the situation is slowly improving, there are vast areas and communities still in the dark and electricity supply does not reach them. Its only in the urban areas and the far more stable Putland have the supply of electricity is consistent, leaving the other areas inaccessible for ICT.
Culture and Lifestyle		One of the biggest challenges for education experts in Somalia is the nomadic nature of communities. It has been difficult to retain school going children in school due to this lifestyle and by extension a challenge to introduce ICT in education.
New Technologies	There are wireless technologies which have started to come into Somalia.	

	These are fast to deploy due to their wireless nature. With these technologies, there are possibilities that deployment into the education sector can come fast if the policies are put in place.	
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1 CIA World Fact Book

<https://cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/so.html#Geo>

2 World Education Services, Profile, Somalia (Revised 2004)

<http://www.wes.org/ca/wedb/somalia/soedov.htm>

3 Puntland (Somalia) to introduce free primary schools

<http://www.afrol.com/articles/16083>

4 UNICEF, Somalia, Education

[http://www.unicef.org/somalia/education\\_56.html](http://www.unicef.org/somalia/education_56.html)

5 Communities unite around education in Somalia

[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/somalia\\_25906.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/somalia_25906.html)

6 UNESCO Institutes of Statistics, Education in Somalia

[http://www.uis.unesco.org/profiles/EN/EDU/countryProfile\\_en.aspx?code=7060](http://www.uis.unesco.org/profiles/EN/EDU/countryProfile_en.aspx?code=7060)

7 Minutes, United Nations Country Team for Somalia, Annual Retreat 19-21 January 2006

<http://unctlists.undp.org/index.cfm?module=AnnualReport&CountryID=SOM>

8 UNDP Somalia, Programmes, Institutional and Capacity Development

<http://www.so.undp.org/page.asp?id=662>

9 UN Development Group, Somalia Team, Work Plan

<http://unctlists.undp.org/index.cfm?module=AnnualReport&page=Workplan&CountryID=SOM&Year=2005&LanguageID=en>

10 Somalia, Basic Education Indicators

<http://education.nairobi-unesco.org/PDFs/somalia.pdf>

11 Capacity Building - Somali Tertiary Institutions Launch Online Distance Learning Initiative, Joint Press Statement by UNDP Somalia, AVU and the World Bank



[http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/SOMALI  
AEXTN/0,,contentMDK:20753705~menuPK:2009582~pagePK:141137~piPK:141127~t  
heSitePK:367665,00.html](http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/SOMALI<br/>AEXTN/0,,contentMDK:20753705~menuPK:2009582~pagePK:141137~piPK:141127~t<br/>heSitePK:367665,00.html)